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	MCC-00	PER-00	GIWI-00	SP-00	IRM-00	SSO-00	SS-00
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E.O. 12958: N/A  
 TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TO](#)  
 SUBJECT: TOGO: THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION FINALLY ON THE ROAD TO THE  
 2010 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

REF: LOME 314

¶1. SUMMARY. After a very slow start, the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) has finally begun the task of organizing the presidential election scheduled for February 28, 2010. There were many roadblocks to overcome at the beginning, from determining who would be on the CENI to choosing a president, and there will more to come given the contentious relations between the opposition parties and the ruling party and government. With barely four months before the election, there is little time for the CENI to pull together a credible election process; however, the government seems determined to keep to the original dates. END SUMMARY.

¶2. The CENI is charged with the organization and supervision of the entire election process. This includes establishing the Local Independent Electoral Committees (CELIs) and appointing members of the Lists and Cards Committees (CLCS) which are in charge of registering new voters, correcting the existing voter list and providing voter registration cards. The CENI also recruits and trains computer technicians and other election personnel. It manages the budget provided by the government and the international community via the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). It orders the printing of secure ballots and voter registration cards and assures they are delivered throughout the country. It validates candidates, appoints national observers and proposes a list of international observers to be accredited by the Government of Togo (GOT). It supervises the vote count and proclaims the final results.

¶3. The 17 members of the CENI were sworn in by the Constitutional Court on September 1, 2009 (see reftel). Although the CENI is designed to be independent, with five members from the ruling party, Rally of the Togolese People (RPT), five from the parliamentary opposition parties, 3 from extra parliamentary parties, and 3 representing civil society, this is not the case. In reality the CENI is divided in two camps: there are 10 members who are pro-ruling party and 7 who are pro-opposition. According to the CENI rules, decisions are to be reached by consensus, resorting to a vote only as a last measure. What this has meant is that for every contentious decision, the CENI reaches an impasse and, in the end, the ruling party carries the day.

¶4. The first example of this was with the election of a president. The opposition parties insisted that the president had to be one of their members; the ruling party absolutely refused. After weeks of deliberations, the acting president, a member of one of the opposition parties, adjourned the meeting saying they would convene the next day and the seven pro-opposition members of the CENI left. The remaining ten pro-ruling party members, who stayed behind, reconvened and elected Henry Kolani, an extra parliamentary representative with known RPT ties, as president. The opposition parties immediately protested and boycotted all further meetings of the CENI, effectively stopping the organization from doing any work. After two weeks of accusations and recriminations between the RPT and the opposition parties and with the intervention of Blaise

Compoare, the facilitator, Mr. Kolani stepped down as president. All 17 members of the CENI reconvened and, after another week of fierce debates, on October 14, finally chose by consensus Taffa Tabiou, a representative of civil society and a supporter of the RPT, as president. The rest of the board is composed as follows: the Vice President is Jean-Claude Atsu Homawoo, a UFC representative; the spokesperson is Yao Date of the civil society and a known supporter of the CAR; and the deputy spokesperson is Koffi Akaba an RPT representative.

¶5. With a functioning board, the CENI now appears to have started the real work of preparing for the elections. One of its first acts was to issue a roadmap of tasks to accomplish before Election Day. The main steps include establishing the CELIs (November 2-6, 2009), staffing the CLCs (November 9-15), and updating the electoral lists (November 19-December 16). Presidential candidate nominations must be submitted to the CENI by January 15 at the latest; however the CENI has not yet said when it will announce the official list of candidates. The electoral campaign will open on February 13 and close on February 26, two days before Election Day. (Note: Togo's laws prevent any candidate from campaigning until two weeks before the actual election. In addition, until the candidates are officially announced by the CENI, they cannot represent themselves as presidential candidates. End Note.)

¶6. Comment: The time lost in coming to a consensus on a president will certainly have a negative impact on the organization of the elections. There is very little time left to accomplish the multitude of tasks needed to ensure free, fair, credible and peaceful elections. However, the CENI and the government seem determined to make it happen. If the opposition wishes to obstruct election preparations, it will be easy to throw up roadblocks to the timetable and render the process even more disorganized and confused than it is now. End Comment.

HAWKINS